

## OBITUARY

### MICHAEL SOUTHWELL-KEELY

1939 – 2006

#### A Quiet Achiever

Michael and his wife Merelyn joined the WA Naturalists' Club in 1974 – the Club's Jubilee year. He immediately became involved in organising the now-famous *Salvinia* clean-up of Tomato Lake in Kewdale – a major undertaking spread out over five Sundays in March and April. While the initial work was carried out entirely by Club members and friends, it inspired the local council (now City of Belmont) to join in and support the final part of the project.

In 1974 and 1975, Michael took over the job of co-ordinating the Intermediates from Lionel Hemsley while he was away – a job that proved to be not lacking in challenges! At the same time, Michael also played an instrumental role in the formation of the Darling Range Branch and, later, many of DRB's flora and fauna surveys, generously offering his organisational, accounting and business skills. Over the ensuing years, he became a familiar figure at DRB meetings and excursions. He was Treasurer of the WA Naturalists' Club in the late 1970s to early 1980s and then President in 1983 and 1984.

In 1982, Michael approached Kevin Coate with the idea of organising an excursion to the

Kimberleys. Although Kevin wasn't available at the time, Michael was keen to go ahead with the trip, and organised what was to become the Club's first long-range excursion with Amesz Tours. In 1983, Michael organised a successful long-range excursion to the Iron Range in Queensland's Cape York Peninsular. At around that time, he also organised another trip, this time to the Pilbara with Kevin Coate, which was to become the first of many long-range excursions with Coate's Wildlife Tours. So began a Club tradition – initiated with Michael's foresight – with Kevin's leadership and knowledge bringing so much pleasure to members. Michael was never content to simply be a Club member, and quickly became known for his willingness to become involved to the fullest measure using his professional accounting and organisational skills to the utmost benefit. His many contributions included redesigning a new layout of *The Naturalist News* in 1983 – a format that is still in use today.

At the end of 1985, Michael and Merelyn moved to Canberra and subsequently opened their home to visiting naturalists – and have remained members of the WA



Naturalists' Club ever since. Michael and Merelyn operated an accounting practice in partnership in Canberra for 20 years. During that time Michael was heavily involved with the two major accounting bodies and served as local president of both as well as serving on many ACT and national committees.

The accounting practice had many artists as clients and Michael gave support to the arts by way of membership of boards,

including a ministerial appointment and providing accounting services without charge to several arts groups.

In recent years Michael pursued his life-long interest in war memorials and what they represented. He took advantage of current technology by creating and continually adding to a website in which he listed war memorials around Australia. Information for the website was collected during trips and from

over one hundred contributors. The site was used by a wide range of people, from officers in local government and people involved in creating and preserving memorials to genealogists and those doing research. The website is in the process of being transferred to the Australian War Memorial – which was probably the most frequent user of the site.

Michael's life was one of service to others. He never made a fuss over his contributions and never expected any – he truly was a quiet achiever. He leaves an indelible mark on the WA Naturalists' Club, and is remembered for his passion for the Club and the DRB, his special talents, and his tireless work alongside Merelyn. He is sadly missed by all who knew him.

– GANE and JUNE DOYLE